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STORIES OF THE FAKIRS

By J. P. JOHNSTON

Author of "Twenty Years of Hustling," "What Happened to Johnston," Etc.

BUNCOING HOTELKEEPERS.

How a Self-Styled Dealer in Diamonds "Played" the Country Landlords—A Pullman Car "Graft"—The Porter and the Plugged Fifty-Cent Piece.

(Copyright, 1905, by Joseph B. Bowles.)

One day a very enterprising looking young man registered at the hotel which I was staying in Muskegon, Mich. He claimed to be a diamond dealer and handed the clerk a small

but the man has held me up for \$200 boot money, which I wish you would let the bearer have for me. I also have on another diamond deal, which I expect to clinch to-day. Yours etc."

Not daring to entrust the messenger with the diamond man's thousand dollar package, and not feeling justified in opening it, the landlord instantly sent the two hundred in cash out of his own pocket. First, however, he questioned the messenger and learned that he was an old resident of Grand Haven, and knew everyone there.

The next day we expected to see a handsome team driven into town, and were really disappointed, when night came, and none had arrived.

The next day was still more disappointing, especially to the landlord. On the following morning, the hotel people began discussing the matter quite freely. The landlord brought out the envelope, upon which was written the diamond dealer's name and the amount of cash enclosed, and although he claimed to feel perfectly secure it was plain that he was much perplexed.

At last, not hearing from the young man, the clerk went to Grand Haven and to his astonishment, found the landlord there walking the floor in his anxiety to know what had become of the man whose package, containing



HE CUT OPEN THE ENVELOPE WITH HIS KNIFE, BUT WITH A SINGLE BOUND THE YOUNG MAN HAD MADE FOR THE DOOR.

pocket case which, he explained, contained an assortment of diamond studs and rings. He asked that this be put in the safe.

The following afternoon he stepped up to the office and asked the landlord for a large-sized envelope. On receiving it, he took from his pocket a large roll of bills and, after counting them in the presence of the proprietor, writing his name on the envelope, and putting down the amount as \$1,000, he said:

"Please get that pocket case of diamonds from the safe. I am going over to Grand Haven this evening on a diamond deal, and will be back to-morrow or the next day."

As the landlord gave him the case of diamonds, the young man handed him

\$1,000, he held in the safe, and for whom he had borrowed \$200 from a merchant friend a couple of days before.

A valise, similar to the one left at Muskegon, had also been left at the Grand Haven hotel.

Putting two and two together, it was plain that both landlords had been duped by this smooth grafter, and thereupon the envelopes were opened. Each was found to contain a lot of brown paper, cut in the exact size of dollar bills.

On comparing notes, the hotel men found that his methods were the same in each case. In both instances he had previously, without the knowledge of the proprietors, secured a large envelope from the hotel stock, on which



"I THINK I SHALL TURN IN THIS PLUGGED FIFTY-CENT PIECE TO THE SLEEPING CAR COMPANY."

the large envelope, which he had carefully sealed, and said:

"Just put this in the safe, landlord."

That evening he started for Grand Haven, carrying with him a small hand-bag, and leaving behind a fairly good-looking medium-sized valise.

The following day a young man alighted from the Grand Haven train, and, going to the hotel, presented a letter from the diamond dealer, which read as follows:

"Dear Landlord: I am closing a deal for a fine pair of horses and a carriage, with which I shall leave here to-morrow morning for Muskegon. I am trading a few diamonds on the deal.

A Foolish Man's Blunder. "Well," said Mrs. Happerson, "I'm glad I have at last convinced you that you were mistaken."

"You haven't convinced me," her husband wearily replied; "you have merely shown me that it is foolish to reason with a woman."

After which the argument was resumed at the same old place.—Chicago Record-Herald.

he had written the name and amount, and in which he had placed the brown paper. Later, when calling for the diamond case, he had hastily exchanged the envelope containing the money for the fake envelope, when the landlord turned to the safe.

American-like, these landlords pocketed their losses, and said nothing.

On my way north that summer I related this incident to all the hotel men I met, including the proprietor of a hotel at Ishpeming, Mich.

The next year, when on another trip in that territory, the Ishpeming landlord told me that a young man, answering my description, appeared about six weeks after I left, and laid plans to bunco him with the \$1,000 fake envelope.

"I hadn't the least suspicion of him," said the landlord, "until he called for his case of diamonds, when it suddenly dawned upon me that this was the very man you had told me about."

As on the previous occasions, the grafter counted out the money, wrote his name on the envelope, and said:

"Landlord, just place this in the safe, will you?"

Instead of doing so, the landlord said: "You claim there is a thousand dollars here, do you?"

"You saw me count it," replied the grafter.

"So I did," answered the landlord, "but I didn't count it myself, so I'll just open it up and count it."

So saying, he cut open the envelope with his knife, but with a single bound the young man bolted through the door.

The last seen of him he was cutting down the railroad like a racehorse, minus baggage, but with his cash and diamonds intact.

On a trip from Cleveland to Chicago a few years ago the porter of the sleeping car undertook to play me for a little "graft," which was both unique and amusing in its manipulation.

When nearing Chicago in the morning he came to my section, brushed my overcoat carefully, and gave the clothes I was wearing a slight brushing. When he had finished, I handed him the only 50-cent piece I had.

The instant I did so I observed that he half turned his back to me as he stepped nearer the window and began carefully scrutinizing the silver piece, and that very instant it flashed through my mind that the colored gentleman was planning to graft me.

After taking a careful look at the money, and having had just about time enough to shift the coin I gave him for any old thing he might have about him, he said:

"Say, mistah! I guess you done gone and made a mistake and gin me a silver piece with a plug in it, besides, it's very badly worn and battered, too."

"Is that so?" I answered (knowing very well that I had given him an almost new silver piece). "Let's see," said I, and, as he handed it to me, "Can't you use it?"

"No, sah," he quickly answered, "I don't want that kind of money."

"Do you want me to keep it?" I asked.

"Yes; I'd rather you would keep it, sah."

"Very well," said I, "I can use it," and dropped it into my pocket.

He stood there anxiously watching and waiting for me to give him another 50-cent piece, and at last discovering that I apparently had no intention of replacing it, he said:

"Is you all gwine to give me nothah half dollar mistah?"

"Certainly not," I answered. "Is there any reason why I should give you a new half dollar, just because you were foolish enough to give me an old one? Why, of course not. You said that you could not use it, and I think I can."

"Well, then—well, then"—he stammered—"I reckon I'll take it back."

"Well," I replied, "I reckon you won't take it back. There is no Indian about me; when I give a thing away, or receive a thing from anyone, I never give back, nor take back."

"But," said he, "you took back the 50 cents you gave me."

"Indeed, I did not!" I answered. "The one I gave you have in your pocket, and the one you gave me is a different one entirely. At any rate," I went on, "I think I shall turn in this plugged 50 cent piece to the sleeping

car company when I report this little episode to them."

The poor darkey became excited and turned almost white, and was so beside himself with his apologies and excuses that he forgot every other passenger on the car.

As I was leaving the car, on our arrival in Chicago, he brushed up against me, and stammered: "Sa—sa—say mistah, please don't say nothin' 'bout dis yer 'greement 'tween you and me, fer I got a wife and four little children to sport, and I can't 'ford to lose ma job."

On returning home I told this little experience to my employees in the office. Our colored porter rolled his chinky eyes about and, with a broad grin, said:

"Mistah Johnston, you got that fellah all right, sah! 'uff! I nevah heard 'bout de plugged silver piece racket before, but a fellah what I used to room with 'ol' me 'bout a mighty good hold-up scheme he used to 'work, almos' like dat, when he was Pullman potnah."

"Well, Gene," I said, "go ahead and explain it to us."

He did so, and the graft was this: The porter had a die struck, exactly the size of a 50-cent piece, upon which he had stamped "Joan Miller, Denver, Col."

He always had one of these in the palm of his hand, while brushing a passenger's clothes. The tip, at the end of a night's journey, is seldom less than a 50-cent piece, and whenever one was given him he would instantly palm it in his right and, quickly stepping near the window, as if to get a better light to examine it, he would say:

"Mistah, I reckon you done gone and gin me younah pocket piece, 'speetin' it was a half dollar. See?" passing it back.

Of course the unsuspecting passenger, presuming that some one had passed a pocket piece on him, would instantly take it up and hand the darky another piece.

Garden Hint. The best way to treat chickens that scratch up your garden is to fenclose them.—Chicago Chronicle.

A Government Evil. The most determined evil which afflicts the clerical force and the officers of the government is the habit of using intoxicating liquors.—Hon. L. M. Morrill, in United States senate.

Compared. Some clever folks who never work still make the greatest showing. The rooster never lays an egg. But he does all the crowing.—Cassell's.

Spilled It. Summer Girl—For goodness' sake, what has happened to Margie's bathing suit? She looks like a fright! Also a S. G.—Doesn't she? The careless thing got it all wet yesterday.—Cleveland Leader.

His Point of View. Jones—Have you a home? Berger—Yes; but it's a thousand miles from here.

Jones—You look as miserable as if it were right around the block.—Town Topics.



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And a person of an inquiring mind may ask the reason why. It is simply that these advisers do not take the trouble to study human nature. They do not spend their thoughts for a moment with acquiring the art of phrenology and kindred branches that will have a tendency to make the pathway to the road of the will, clear and devoid of all obstacles.

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